



**Department of Justice
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Southern District of Texas**

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DRUG TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO 50 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON WITHOUT PAROLE

BROWNSVILLE, TX – Noel Exinia, 35, has been sentenced to 600 months (50 years) in federal prison, without parole, for leading an organization that transported and distributed hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and lesser quantities of marijuana from the Rio Grande Valley to points as far north as New York. United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced the sentence imposed late today by United States District Judge Andrew Hanen. In September 2005, after four days of trial, Exinia chose to plead guilty rather than continue with the jury trial and was then convicted of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute kilogram quantities of cocaine. Today's sentencing, held in Brownsville, came after a lengthy hearing on Exinia's motion to withdraw his guilty plea. Judge Hanen denied that motion.

In assessing its sentence, the court noted that because of the defendant's acts, "untold millions of dollars flowed into the coffers of drug dealers," and victims of drug dealing likely endured "untold miseries." The court found that Exinia was a leader of an extensive part of the Gulf Cartel. The court also noted the testimony from former defense attorney Bill May regarding Exinia's threats to kill the lead prosecutor and witnesses. The security problems raised by this information prompted the transfer of the trial to Houston from Brownsville, Texas.

According to the pleadings in this case, evidence presented during the four days of trial and at the re-arraignment hearing, the investigation into Exinia's drug trafficking activity began when Noel Exinia's brother, Carlos, of Weslaco, Texas, was arrested in Michigan on December 6, 2004. Michigan law enforcement authorities discovered \$485,000 hidden in the 18 wheeler tractor trailer rig Carlos was operating. After his release by Michigan authorities, Carlos returned to Texas. Once in Texas, Carlos consulted a fortune teller or "curandera," seeking the curandera's professional assistance to put a curse on Michigan authorities hoping they would not be able to complete their investigation prompted by the seizure of the \$485,000 in drug currency.

After Carlos Exinia's visit to the curandera, Noel Exinia, visited with the same curandera. During Noel Exinia's visit with the curandera and her spouse, Noel Exinia revealed his participation in the drug conspiracy. Exinia's comments prompted federal authorities to establish court ordered wiretaps in Texas and New York. Through the wiretaps authorities learned that Noel Exinia headed a large scale cocaine transportation cell, utilizing his interstate trucking firm NE & Family Transport of La Feria, Texas. The investigation and trial testimony showed that Noel Exinia used this business as a front to ship hundreds of kilograms of cocaine to

New York, Michigan, Ohio, and North Carolina, and to haul millions of dollars of cocaine proceeds back to Texas. The amount of cocaine involved in the conspiracy as found by the court totaled 499 kilograms. According to trial testimony, the largest single amount of money transported was approximately \$4 million dollars.

On January 19, 2005, DEA agents, armed with a warrant, searched a tractor trailer rig heading back to La Feria, Texas, from New York City. In it, agents found \$805,416 in drug proceeds and a ledger documenting the delivery of 246 kilograms of cocaine to New York City earlier that month. The search was conducted in Cameron County, Texas.

Exinia has been and will remain in the custody of the United States Marshal's Service, without bond, pending his transfer to a prison facility to be designated by the United States Bureau of Prisons to serve his sentence.

The U.S. Attorney had high praise for the prosecutors and agents who vigorously pursued this matter in the face of personal threats. Mr. DeGabrielle noted, "Their efforts represent the highest traditions of the Department of Justice."

The indictment of Exinia is the result of an investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Charles Lewis and Jody Young.

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